

Food Theology

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Date: 22 November 2009

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[0 : 00] Thank you for having me. I hope that I can speak loudly and clearly enough and hopefully slowly enough for you as well. Sorry for those of you who are coming expecting to hear about Trinitarian hospitality.

I did change my topic on Bill during the week. But it's kind of related. Just not the same title. So I just want to start by asking, when Bill did say food theology, what did you think of? What kind of came to mind? Feeding an overfed congregation. We don't do anything without food. Okay. Kosher. Kosher? Yep. Anything else? I thought about spiritual theology.

Okay. Yep. Eating the word. Taking it in and digesting it. Ingest. Great. Okay. Well, this summer I did a course with, many of you may know, Lauren and Mary Ruth Wilkinson out on Galliano.

[1 : 18] And it was called Food, What was it called? Food, Theology and something else. And I also did a class with Dr John Barclay who was from Durham University.

And he was actually studying Paul, but he gave an evening lecture on food and theology as well. And so what I'm going to share with you is very much largely based on those two classes, but predominantly what John Barclay had talked about and shared while he was here in Vancouver. So, it might be a little bit controversial towards the end. And I'll be interested to get your feedback and just to generate some debate. And I hope that you can stick with me as I go through it.

I'll try not to rush through everything that I've got to say. Okay. So, let's begin. It's probably one of the remarkable facts about Christianity that it has never to this day developed any universally or commonly practiced food taboos.

So, other world religions have, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, they have clearly defined rules in relation to diet.

[2 : 41] In particular, abstention from certain kinds of food, from meat, from meat of animals slaughtered in the wrong way, or even just from all meat. In the case of Christianity, the absence of food taboos is all the more remarkable given that its roots lie in Judaism, whose very precise food rules are enshrined in divine laws still retained within the Christian scriptures.

The Jewish food rules, and in particular, abstinence from pork, were very well known in antiquity. A frequent subject of inquiry, amusement or disdain by non-Jews, who wondered what on earth pigs were for if they were not meant to be eaten.

So, this pork taboo and the Jewish anxiety about contamination by Gentile idolatry combined to make it very difficult for Jews to share meals with non-Jews.

They could host, perhaps, but given the requirement of reciprocity in giving and sharing hospitality, it was difficult to cement friendships across ethnic boundaries by meal fellowship.

And the resulting separatism caused Jews to be known at the time as unfriendly and unsocial. Well, anthropologists will tell us that meals and dietary laws are crucial markers of social identity and social boundaries.

[4 : 15] What you eat, who you eat with, what hierarchies, inclusions and exclusions are established at the meal table, these are all fundamental components of social relations.

Jews knew very well their dietary laws distinguished them from non-Jews. And on the whole, they celebrated that fact.

As the Mosaic laws indicate, the food rules sanctify the Jewish nation. They established boundaries between Jews and non-Jews. It's striking then that Christianity, with its roots in this tradition, quickly abandoned any such attempt to demarcate and protect its vulnerable identity.

So there are signs that this abandonment of food taboos became, in fact, a point of special importance to some early Christian thinkers.

So we're studying Acts at the moment. And while we're not up to Acts chapter 10, Luke, in Acts 10 and 11, records with special emphasis Peter's struggle in overcoming food taboos in the vision of the sheep that was let down from heaven, that was filled with unclean animals, which he was instructed to eat.

[5 : 35] For Luke, this is a symbol of the overcoming of boundaries, not just in eating with Gentiles, but also in welcoming uncircumcised, un-Judaized Gentiles into the Christian community.

Although the apostolic decree recorded in Acts 15 retains residual dietary restrictions, not eating food offered to idols or meat properly slaughtered.

Luke clearly regards the divinely granted success of the Gentile mission a sign and legitimation of the abandonment of the crucial Jewish distinction between clean and unclean foods.

At the same time, Colossians pours scorn on those who impose rules concerning food and drink. I'm thinking here of Colossians 2.

And 1 Timothy, 1 Timothy chapter 4, castigates any teaching that enjoys abstinence from food on the grounds that everything created by God is good and is to be enjoyed as long as it is received with thanksgiving, made holy by the word of God and prayer.

[6 : 52] So by being omnivorous it seems, the early Christians claimed to be a universal, boundary-crossing community.

They grounded their food habits in the doctrine of a universal creation of equally good things, which mirrored their practice of all inclusive and undifferentiated communities.

So at first glance, this looks like a religious tradition that has deliberately lost touch with the physical and social dimensions of life, symbolised and encapsulated in food.

But then we recall that at the same time that Christianity largely reputed food to booze, it invested very great significance in meals, and in one sort of meal in particular, the Lord's Supper.

So if we think back also to the Gospel of Luke, I'm sure you'll remember that whenever we saw signs of conflict, you know that much is at stake.

[8 : 04] And it's therefore significant that the Gospels record great controversy over Jesus' practice of table fellowship. And that one of the biggest and most significant disputes in early Christianity occurred between Paul and Peter in Antioch, being known seven nations who had a specific discussion and fathers including a group of economic and hoe different Steporeths Which was trophy that nearly all dwellings falling into that was an important to be a paper.

Yeah. that Christian community was importantly established in shared meals. The breaking of bread, which Luke records was a habitual practice of first Christians.

And of course the meal that most definitely establishes common Christian identity was the Lord's Supper, whose origins were traced to Jesus' last meal before his death, the meal which enacted and recalled his self-giving on the cross, the foundation of Christian existence, and which looked forward explicitly to the eschaton, the hope which sustained early Christians through suffering and social ridicule.

Here, interestingly, the food shared is significant, though not for its difference from other people's food, but because the bread and the wine signify something very specific about the body of Christ given and the blood of Christ shed.

Here, Christian identity is formed not by the exclusion of foods or people, but by the intensification of meaning in ordinary food, the Christological redefinition of a common meal.

[10 : 07] It's in this meal that we have the formation of Christian identity in hospitality or welcome, in meal sharing, in food consumption, in the focus concentrated on bread and wine, in the formal pronouncement of the meaning of the meal.

These are all identifying, forming ritual practices that helped to offset the fact as a cross-cultural community, Christians did not share any food taboos to distinguish themselves from non-Christians. Okay, so hopefully I've set the scene for you. But my focus today won't be on the Lord's Supper, though it will not be entirely absent, but on a set of fascinating debates about food, in particular in Paul's letters.

These indicate that in this discussion about food, the first Christians were grappling with some fundamental questions about Christian identity and about how they related to non-Christians and about how they could or could not allow cultural diversity among themselves.

So what I'll do, or try to do, is to trace out the principles that Paul draws from these discussions concerning Christians' relationship to the Lord and their relationship to one another.

[11:31] I'll conclude by arguing, possibly controversially, on the basis of some of these principles that in the present environmental crisis, Christians should develop a food taboo or near food taboo in a way that he has never done before.

This, I will argue, is an urgent and necessary element to any Christian ethic in our current global context. Okay, so, food does matter, or does it.

At several points in 1 Corinthians, Paul shows a kind of nonchalance about food that suggests that he has fundamentally removed food from the category of things that matter in Christian practice. At the end of chapter 6, he indicates that sex very much does matter, at least sex with a prostitute is wholly incompatible with the belonging of the body to the Lord.

But he appears to contrast this bodily issue with that of food, declaring that food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy both one and the other.

[12:47] A little later, while discussing food offered to idols, he declares, as a general principle, this is in chapter 8, food will not commend us to God.

We are no worse off if we do, not eat it, and no better off if we do. So, this seems to place food in a category of indifferent things, like the Stoic notion of things that might be preferable in certain circumstances, but fundamentally they don't matter either way.

So, one cannot imagine a law-observant Jew saying such a thing. And indeed, in the same context, Paul declares that though he can live like a Jew among Jews, he can also live as if without the law, among those without the law, being fundamentally obliged only to Christ.

That's in 1 Corinthians chapter 9. So, this seems to suggest a drastic reduction in the range of things that matter to Christian identity.

As if, in the whole sphere of food, the Christian movement is principally, culturally, non-specific. Is in principle culturally non-specific.

[14:07] So, when Paul later quotes Psalm 24, that the earth is the Lord's and everything in it, in order to justify buying and eating whatever is sold in the meat market, we have a clear theological warrant for declaring food a non-issue for Christian believers.

Or do we? This citation of the Psalms comes immediately after Paul has issued strong warnings against idolatry and declared that it is out of the question to partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demonia, which is usually translated demons.

So, although some consider Paul wholly self-contradictory at this point, I think what he's arguing is that many kinds of foodstuffs were offered to beings that others called deities and he calls demonia. Supernatural beings that he refuses to dignify with the title of God. So, at temple altars, in temple dining rooms, at crossroads and in private homes, before small-scale shrines, many different foods, including grain and cakes and fruit and meat and liquid samples, were poured out onto the ground in a libation.

They were regularly offered in dedication to the deities, sanctifying both that food and the larger meal of which it was a part.

[15:44] The issue here for Paul is not the foodstuffs themselves, they are neutral, or rather, they were created by God and always potentially returned to God in thanksgiving, but what's important is the context in which they are consumed.

To be more specific, what concerns Paul is what we might call the orientation of the food and of its consumption. If food is regarded and eaten in orientation to demonia, it cannot be oriented to God, and thus, what comes from God and belongs to him is blasphemously redirected away from him to something or someone other.

This is why Paul finishes the discussion of this delicate matter by insisting that it is permissible to eat any food so long as one can do so with thanksgiving.

And of course that word is Eucharistia. Whatever you eat or drink, whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. The act of thanksgiving, of saying grace, orients the food back to the giver and orients the eater likewise.

So thus far, from being completely irrelevant, food, or rather the dedication and orientation of food, emerges as a site of strategic importance for Christian identity.

[17:23] What goes on at the table declares, in very fundamental terms, who we are. For Paul and his contemporaries, drawing this line at the meal table made a huge social difference, as it required them to absent themselves from quite a large range of social occasions which were inextricably bound up with worship to pagan deities.

The warnings that Paul issues indicate that everything is at stake for the Christian in this question of the orientation of food and its consumption.

Paul is pressing here for a definition of Christian identity founded not on categories of forbidden or permitted foods, but on a life hermeneutic.

A way of interpreting practice that asks for every object including food and of every act including eating, whether or not it is dedicated in thanksgiving to God.

So this life hermeneutic can touch every sphere and station in life. But Paul knows that it requires also careful scrutiny of every object and every action.

[18 : 50] Those of us who live in Western cultures are not daily confronted with this question in relation to food offered to idols, but there may be features of food and food consumption that will make us uncomfortable if placed under the spotlight of that question.

The question being can this be performed in thanksgiving if you've got to God? So moreover, there is a second feature of food consumption that causes Paul to qualify his apparently complete nonchalance regarding food.

food. And this follows directly on from the first. Paul knows that there may be occasions and contexts where some Christians can eat the meal set before them in a way that is entirely directed to the Lord.

But other Christians present at the same meal cannot do so since for them the food involves them inextricably in worship to some other deity.

There may be various reasons for this difference like cultural or social or educational or psychological but Paul refuses to scorn those who have greater sensitivities on this matter.

[20 : 09] He knows how much is at stake here. To put pressure on someone to eat food that they think orient them towards something other than the Lord is to weaken and soon fatally snap their allegiance to Christ.

As they habitually turn away from Christ in their meal taking their loyalty to Christ will eventually collapse. Paul shows an extraordinary ability here to enter into the consciousness of those who see things quite differently from himself and makes a remarkable allowance for the different ways in which people of different cultures and backgrounds negotiate their orientation to Christ.

What matters to him first and foremost is not judging whose consciousness of things is right or wrong in regard to any particular meal context but the responsibility of every Christian to care for their brothers and sisters and to consider their impact consider the impact that their eating might have upon them.

as Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 8 highlighting meat as the main presenting issue if food is the cause of my brother's failing or falling I will never eat meat lest I cause my brother to fall.

So note that Paul's principle here is pragmatic contextual and specific in application. he's not banning all meat eating for all time for all Christians but asking them to consider what in their context does or does not harm other people.

[21 : 58] A similar pragmatism and specificity has instituted other forms of abstention in Christian history. So the one I guess good example is from the 19th century probably with Methodism and if we think about England and the probably the working class areas where Methodism had the brilliance and the courage to actually address the issue of alcoholism and it advocated radical action.

If alcohol is the cause of my brother's failing I will never touch a drop they argued. The alcohol abstention was local specific and situational not necessarily of value in all contexts but the principle it embodies presses upon us in every context are the liberties which we enjoy and to which we are entitled subtly destructive to others and do we care to find out?

So here then is a second principle to put alongside the first in relation to Christian food culture. The first was that all food consumption must be done in orientation and thanksgiving to God and the second then is that any food consumption must take into account the effects of that eating on others.

Sometimes people can be destroyed by what we eat even if the consumption seems harmless enough to us. The two principles perhaps merge into one another since orientation to God who gave himself in love in Christ can hardly be separated from love of others for whom Christ died.

In fact the two merge quite explicitly when Paul discusses the Lord's Supper. the meal that encapsulates what every other meal should be.

[24 : 04] This is the meal that is most explicitly oriented to the Lord. It is the Lord's Supper and is characterised most obviously by thanksgiving.

It is after all called the Eucharist. But Paul is furious that at precisely this meal the wealthier members of the church humiliate those who have nothing.

And he says each goes ahead with his own meal. So one is hungry while another is drunk. It is at this meal that Christians are required to enact what should be true of all meals, uncompromised orientation to the Lord and unwavering attention to others, especially the weak, the vulnerable and the hungry.

And the ethic of the Lord's Supper should be the ethic of every Christian meal. Okay, so there's one other context in which Paul discusses food issues in a similarly nuanced way.

And where he puts to work the two same principles, that we have just identified in relation to food offered to idols. But interestingly, in this case, the topic is not just the context and orientation of food, but the food stuff themselves.

[25 : 32] And even more interestingly, Paul makes space here for the practice of certain food taboos. So the passage that I'm talking about now is Romans 14 and 15, where Paul discusses communal meals at which some believe that they may eat anything, while others, the weak, eat only vegetables.

Now, research on this passage and its historical context indicates that the issue is not vegetarianism as such, but the cultural practical effects of the observance or non-observance of Jewish food laws at a multicultural Christian meal.

the fact that Paul talks about clean and unclean food in this context shows that the Mosaic laws are at stake.

And it was not uncommon for Jews when having to eat in Gentile context to decline to eat all meat and to do, and to make do on a vegetarian diet.

And I'm sure immediately Daniel all comes to your mind while he did just that living in Babylon.

Thus, we can have some Christians in the Roman congregations following the Jewish and Mosaic customs and some who weren't.

[26 : 57] And when they came together for meals, especially in non-kosher homes, the law observant believers were strongly critical of those who ate what seemed to them evidently unclean meat.

While the non-law observant believers despised their scrupulous brothers and sisters, no doubt considering their scruples a sign of superstition or intellectual weakness.

So Paul takes a very interesting position on this deeply divisive issue. On the one hand, he states very boldly that I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself.

This is in 14:14. That categorically overrides the Levitical laws and appears to rule out of court any Christian food taboos.

Indeed, a few verses later, he insists that the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

[28 : 08] On the other hand, he acknowledges and respects the fact that other genuine believers are persuaded quite differently. Some food is unclean for someone who thinks it is so.

The context makes clear that this is not tolerance of any and every difference of opinion, but that recognition must be given to differing, even opposite practices, so long as both are genuinely performed in honour of the Lord.

As Paul puts it, he who eats, eats in honour of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while he who abstains, abstains in honour of the Lord and gives thanks to God.

God. So notice the same principle of the orientation that we found in the Corinthian discussion.

What matters for Paul is whether you can eat and do direct your eating or your non-eating in honour and thanksgiving to God.

The only difference is that in this case, the question reaches all the way down to the foodstuffs themselves. And it is because he allows for genuine Christ honouring practices of both kinds that Paul insists the strong must not pressurise the weak into behaviour that undermines their own allegiance to Christ.

[29 : 43] Again, we note that priority is given to the weak and the vulnerable and that Paul requires from the strong a burden-bearing commitment which it explicitly traces back to Christ.

Let each of us please his neighbour for his good to build him up for Christ did not please himself. So what Paul envisages here is a single Christian community containing diversity of cultural practice with acute sensitivity to those who have most to lose by being required to follow a universal norm. So it's often said that Christianity fosters a kind of universalism that enforces uniformity. That just because it crosses ethnic boundaries it also undermines the integrity of different cultures creating a kind of generalised cultural sameness.

things. But I think this passage on the central cultural issue of food speaks otherwise. Paul envisages that a common allegiance to Christ can allow, even foster, strong differences in practice. If the Christian community erases ethnic boundaries, it does not erase every ethnic and cultural line. man. Indeed, it values difference in mutually constructive and enriching, as mutually constructive and enriching, and it raises very sharp questions about who has the most to lose when cultural traditions are overridden.

[31 : 28] So to transfer these principles to the Christian community bound together by common allegiance to Christ, to the wider political context where common allegiance is always already coloured by some cultural tradition is no easy task.

But I believe there are resources here worth careful attention. And so I hope that what we can see that we've been led by this analysis of Paul is the following four conclusions.

First, that although Christian faith imposes no universal rule regarding foods, regarding which foods may or may not be eaten, food is not a non-issue for Christians.

But it is liable to raise a number of acute and serious questions concerning Christian obedience.

Second, that a critical question concerning food is whether it can be eaten in thanksgiving to God, whether its orientation is to the Lord.

Food consumption is not a neutral issue for Christians, not an unspiritual matter beneath their moral radar, but as much a part of their Christian orientation as every other dimension of life.

[32 : 48] Thirdly, that it is central to Christian discipleship to consider the effects of one's practice on others, to look beyond one's own legitimate rights and freedoms, to see how others are affected, even food, what we eat, how we eat, where we eat, can have serious knock-on effects on others, unintended perhaps and unexpected, but in our responsibility to know, but it is our responsibility to know those effects and to weigh them.

Finally, fourthly, that food to booze are not in principle un-Christian. Abstention may be a necessary way of honouring the Lord. In particular, if food consumption causes harm to others, if it damages the weak or humiliates the poor, it is the Christian responsibility to impose a contextually relevant food to boo.

Paul says, whatever we do, we must not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. God. Okay, so, I'm just going to push the boundary a little bit further now and see what you think.

So, the Christian tradition has long harboured a suspicion of luxury in relation to food consumption, and the annual discipline of Lent has been, for many, a regular reminder of the need for self-discipline in this regard.

More recently, with increasing awareness of gross global inequalities in wealth, Western Christians have rightly had their conscience pricked concerning what it means to be a rich Christian in an age of hunger.

[34 : 41] The author of that book, his name is Ronald Sider, and he, within that book, presses rightly into the question, insisting that as long as one Christian anywhere in the world is hungry, the Eucharistic celebration of all Christians everywhere is incomplete.

So, in recent decades, the fair trade movement has rightly spread from the Christian community into common consciousness, raising questions of trade justice to the top of the agenda.

When consumers enjoy cheap prices for their food and other products, we are all aware that as the world population grows, pressure on land, water and food will become an increasingly critical issue in which questions of justice and equity will be critical for our global future.

So, what I'd like to push us further on today actually also concerns climate change and its relation to food. And specifically, the contribution of meat eating to the potentially cataclysmic process of global warming.

So, I'm sure you're all aware and you don't need me to remind you of the seriousness of climate change threat. If the temperature increases by two degrees, we'll enter an irreversible descent into climate change and result in chaos.

[36 : 17] So, what is at stake here is not only the ecological balance of the world, but the lives and livelihoods of billions of people, especially the poorest, whose existence will be threatened or thrown into chaos by desertification, by rising sea levels, by extreme weather events, by floods, forest fires and failed harvests, by water shortages, by devastated fish stocks and by overgrazing of increasingly limited arable land and forced migration.

So, we face an environmental and resulting social economic crisis on a scale that we have never seen before in the history of humanity. And the question is, what is our Christian responsibility in the face of all this?

Of the many contributors to global warming, we are just beginning to realise the significance of livestock production. The farming of cattle, sheep and pigs.

In several reports recently, including one of the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation, it's estimated globally livestock production contributes as much as 18% of the world's greenhouse gas production, considerably more than that contributed by all forms of transport.

There are several ways in which increasingly intensive livestock production harms the planet. In overgrazing and land degradation, in water consumption and water pollution, in the production of fertiliser and in the heavy use of arable land for the production of livestock beef.

[38 : 03] So, just to give you an analysis, like something to context, it takes 8 kilograms of grain to produce 1 kilogram of beef. But if we focus here on greenhouse gas emission, the two main factors are clear.

First, the deforestation of large tracts of earth are being cleared to provide grazing land for animals. And as you know, this has a massive impact on CO2 emissions and loss of carbon storage.

And secondly, greenhouse gas emissions caused by the animals themselves, specifically ruminants such as sheep and cows. The really damaging things are the methane caused by their belching of cows and sheep and the nitrous oxide produced by their manure.

So, if we... So, methane is 25... 23 times more dangerous than CO2 in its global warming effects and nitrous oxide is 296 times more damaging than CO2.

So, if we translate this into a carbon footprint and focus here on beef, which has twice the carbon footprint of pigs or poultry, the consumption of one kilo of beef is the equivalent of a 250 kilometer car journey.

[39 : 29] So, to put it another way, to halve your consumption of red meat would do more for the environment than halving the use of your car. So, with rising levels of wealth in the developing world, especially Asia and India, there is a rapidly increasing demand for milk, meat and eggs.

And it is predicted that meat production will at least double by 2050. So, by reducing our demand, in short, we need...

Like... So, let me just... I've just lost my... 2000... Double. Yep. Okay. So... Sorry.

As many commentators are currently noting, on top of our concerns about fair trade, food miles and food packaging, the next big issue is clear and urgent. We need to reduce our meat consumption. In the UK, they've just started recently a campaign which has been fronted by Sir Paul McCartney, which is called Meat Free Monday. Just to give you an example.

[40 : 48] So, I'm not calling for a complete ban on eating. I'm not suggesting that we all become vegetarian. Although some of you may choose to be vegetarian.

But I do think that it's time for Christians to take the lead in practising a major reduction in meat consumption and in calling others to follow suit.

Of course, there are partial precedents for this in the Christian tradition. The Catholic tradition of fish on Fridays and the Orthodox abstention from meat during Lent. But this call for a partial food taboo is clearly more extensive and more demanding.

But I hope that you can see how it issues from the very same principles that we unearthed in our analysis of Pauline's passages on food.

We are required to ask ourselves, can we eat this food or continue this pattern of food consumption in honour of the Lord and in thanksgiving to him?

[41 : 54] Can we do so knowing the damage this is doing to the world he created and for which he gave himself in Christ? We are also required to ask, what are the effects of my eating on others and what damage might I be doing to them even unintentionally so?

And here, the more we know about the devastating effects of climate change on world population, especially on the poorest and the most vulnerable, the more this question should haunt our meal

tables.

in fact, in our own context, or in a new context, several of Paul's statements on food take on a wholly new light.

He told the Romans that the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. In our current crisis, we need to turn that around because the kingdom of God is about righteousness, in the sense of justice, and because the kingdom of God is about peace and joy, we have to be concerned with matters of food and drink, where they precisely create the conditions of global injustice, conflict and misery.

In both the food passages we studied, Paul's concern for the welfare of others was paramount. His concern lest eating cause the damage and even destruction of others can certainly be expanded from its original context of damage to conscience and Christian allegiance to damage in a direct physical sense.

[43 : 37] our overconsumption of meat could literally cause the death of others, and it is impossible to square this with the Christian duty of love towards all those whom Christ died.

Indeed, Paul's only direct statement on meat now takes on a wholly new meaning. If food is the cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall. So I hope that I have shown that while food taboos have never been a general or universal feature of Christian identity or Christian culture, issues concerning food and food consumption and meal taking have been formative in the definition of Christian identity from the very beginning.

And as long as we continue to celebrate the Lord's Supper with its paradigmatic concern for orientation to the Lord and for attention to the needs of the poor, meals and food will continue to remain at the heart of Christian self-understanding.

Food should thus become, in at least this respect, a marker of Christian identity. Anything less and we will fail in our obligation to embody and express Christ's gracious embrace of the world in life, death and resurrection in Jesus.

Thank you. Thank you.

[45 : 22] So I hope that's given you just a different way of thinking about something you might not have thought about before. And I admit to being a bit controversial to push you into thinking.

But if anyone's got any questions, I'm sure I'm happy to try and answer them, but I'm sure there's other people who might be able to answer them better than me too. Yep. I'm just wondering if you, in your study or preparations with guidance, the whole genetically modified organism.

Yes. Like the O-G-M-O. Yep. Genetically modified GMO. Genetically modified. Or cross, anyway.

Yes. Anyway, that's a whole other issue, but it's very theologically relevant to.

Yes, it is. It's a whole realm where we also have to, yeah, consider and think about. Yep. I appreciate you addressing this anyway.

Thank you. Phil. Is your attack on the hamburger a social gospel?

[46 : 31] Well, I hope that what I've shown is by using the scriptures and showing how Paul did care for people that the social gospel needs to come hand in hand with the gospel.

Yeah. So I don't know that we're doing it just because we want to care for the poor. We're doing it because Christ cares. Yeah.

Thank you, Amanda. I was going to do a great talk. Thank you. It was really wonderful to have the actual example of the 250 kg versus the 1 kg of meat.

My question is, when you're speaking about limiting or decreasing our amount of meat that we need, that doesn't do it. I mean, I just don't know how it will link to milk because Christ, you've got milk.

Yeah. So milk production is not nearly as bad as meat production. So just generally, if any of you are agricultural background, but cattle lots, it's the intensification of feeding an animal very quickly so that it will get to its selling weight very quickly.

[47 : 49] And then so that they, I'm sure you've seen pictures of large cattle lots. It's similar to battery chicken farming. Like, the cattle don't move. They just sit there and just, basically, the job is to get them to a certain weight by a certain time.

Whereas dairy is very different. So the cows are being milked twice a day and they, you know, are used for a period of, well, it varies, but like up to 10 or 15 years, cows will be milked for.

So it's not nearly as bad. Oh, thank you. I can still drink. Yeah. Yeah.

I appreciate that you mentioned cider because that's something I'm not very familiar with in a long time. Okay, yep. But this is going back to a principal's question. You laid up the text and it did a very good job of it, you know, leading toward a target of meat.

Yeah. But coming from those same texts, other people, other people of faith can go in parallel or even different directions. The same argument could apply. The effect of alcohol in our society worldwide is devastating.

[48 : 58] It almost happens. We all go downtown and we can see that. We see it in our own communities, in our own blocks. Many people then said, we should not partake in alcohol at all because we're supporting the alcohol industry. We shouldn't put real wine in our communion cup because it's supporting an industry that kills.

And you could fan it out. You could get into genetically modified crops or into monocultures, growing canola to put in oils and fillers and foods. Never mind, just meat production.

I'm wondering, how do you go with one? Do you have to go with all of them? Yeah, it just opens up, doesn't it? It's like I put a wedge in the door and it just opens up a whole lot of issues.

I mean, yeah, I guess the principle that, like I would hope that we need to consider is what can I do? You know, it's that, what is it that, the way that I can impact or change and without trying to do everything and, you know, without also being, becoming moralistic or, you know, that's the other extreme I don't want to push us to, like, I mean, I still eat McDonald's every now and again.

That sort of thing. So, I think they're good questions that as a Christian community we need to think through. So, I don't want to put a blanket ban on, you know, suggesting that Anglicans shouldn't have wine.

[50 : 23] No, I wasn't suggesting that. Yeah, no. I'm using the parallel. The extreme, yeah. The way our society is set up now, the oddness of our society, we're not close to the land anymore. If you think about it, there's probably nothing we can put in our mouth that isn't doing some damage to somebody somewhere anymore.

Yeah. Unless we've brought it in our backyard. And I think, so the thing that... I'm not just counting what you're saying. No, no, no. I guess where I've landed is trying to work with, like, local and organic produce so that I know that at least I'm eating in season and I'm eating, I'm trying to eat in season and I'm trying to eat food that I know where it's been sourced from.

Yeah. Yeah. Sheila. Very interesting, Nerida. When did the Christian Church introduce food rules about not eating meat on Friday and during that not eating it on Christ's day?

And what was the purpose of it? I don't know specifically, but I guess it was beyond... Do you? Second... Oh, please. No, no, no. Just as a parallel, there was various rules around that, but we were just reading the Henry VIII, the Tudor, the Tudor year, and the enforcement of meatless Fridays was expanded to meatless Thursdays for political reasons to support a fishing industry that was having problems.

So there's been all kinds of entanglements around rules. Yeah, I think it's been a long time. I like very much your expose, and I think it rejoins some of our previous discussions where there's ambiguity, but it's also a question of the fact of not excluding.

[52 : 12] I think the human being loves to put rules down and makes us more secure, but the gospel and Christ's message in general has not put down rules and removed them.

And in certain cultures, and in certain cultures, the exclusion or the rules has been completely deformed. If you go to Africa, you can be a Christian.

If you don't drink, if you don't smoke, it's got nothing to do with Christianity. And if you break those five rules, you're not a Christian. That's quite clear. In India, if you're a Christian, you can marry anybody, and so it's free for all.

You can eat anything until you're unclean, and that's the definition of a Christian. So, again, it's a question of rules. So if we explain why we do things, I think it makes it very clear.

You can control that. Thank you. Yeah, I think, certainly where I've come from and grown up in is that we're kind of led to be, the only thing that makes Christians different is Jesus, and so therefore we're able to partake in everything.

[53 : 16] But I guess what, and part of being at Regen and having the privilege of being able to study scripture and learn under professors is being able to say, well, actually, maybe I need to reconsider some of those things now.

Sheila? The prohibition against pork sort of interests me, because it doesn't, the pig doesn't have those difficulties for the environment that you mentioned about sheep, and cattle, and neither Jews nor Muslims eat pork, not even, if it has now been improved over the centuries and doesn't have intestinal worms and much of other things.

I have often wondered, in terms of looking at the scripture, who was looking after the pigs, and to what purpose were they being used? The ones that were the gathering swine story?

Mm. Like, why would anybody be in the business in that kind of growth, is what I thought. But, where's that going? Just using them to eat the weeds?

I don't know. Yeah, like, who would they sell the meat to? And pigs don't produce anything else. So, here we have the two large groups of people, Orthodox Jews and Orthodox Muslims, that don't eat pork.

[54 : 38] And we aren't actually promoting that. We aren't saying, let's turn our flocks and herds into, what do you call a group of pigs? I don't know, collective noun for pigs.

A herd of swine. Thank you. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. I heard of swine. This isn't being promoted as an alternative. I mean, instead we're thinking of pulse crops, and soy, and stuff like that.

Mm. So, is your question why? Aren't we, is there more? Yeah. Well, and I also don't understand where the prohibition about pork came from.

Yeah, I don't either. Is it the, yeah, I'm not sure. Does anyone else know? No? No? Yes. Dr. Packer. No?

Dr. Packer. I'm one of the many who still get nice. That's okay that we all don't know then. So it can be significant. We'll work out an anthropologically or something. Yeah. I think in terms of your, the more current context of why we don't eat more pig, more pork.

[55 : 49] Pork production can be just farmed as intensively as chicken production. So it can equally be just as unhealthy for the animal and for the environment.

It doesn't have to be. So in the same way that we can have free range chickens, you can have free range pigs. So, but many people choose not to farm, be pork farmers that way.

Pig farmers, pig farmers. Which is based again on, you know, capital kind of requirements. Thanks Nerdy. Are you not sure if the theoretical, or is anybody out there, is going to be able to do this idea, again, of linkage.

If I do something to linkage, I do something today and it affects somebody across the world. I think Roman Catholic Church pulled out of the United Way because some member organizations there in family planning counseling.

So they said, no, we can't support these charities. And went with their own charity. Is that good linkage, bad linkage? How much linkage can we do? But I'm very, I'm very aware of that.

[56 : 54] Yeah. And there's so many links. So can I answer it by saying, like, from a Christian perspective, well maybe I should answer it from a non-Christian perspective, Michael Pollan has probably done the most research in the area of how, what we eat links back.

So he's written things like Omnivore's Dilemma and books like that, which show you how, what you eat, the end product relates to it.

And if you take it beyond food, yeah, there's, I don't know. There are some books out there which are helpful if you want to think more about that.

But I think the principle that needs to kind of ground everything we do is that, like, we are very good at going to the scriptures to get our principles, but we need to learn how to apply those principles possibly, if I can say that a bit more contextually.

So sometimes we might read a passage about meat eating and it doesn't even occur to us or about, um, so I think we just need to be more vigilant, which is hard to do.

[58 : 17] You know, you feel like every area of your life you've got to... I'm just thinking about, um, I grew up on a beef farm and, uh, I think growing up for lunch and supper, I don't, I can't remember eating meals when I didn't eat meat.

Meats, yeah. Well, I've eaten a lot of meat. But it causes me to, but I have wondered, apart from the global impact, if I shouldn't be concerned that blood is being shed to meet my tastes, if they can be met by, if my bodily repair can be done by eating vegetables, um, should I take seriously that my sin...

Like, it appears to me that the first animal was, was slain to, to, as a covering for man's sin. And, uh, I am, I believe, instructed in scripture not to, um, trample in Christ's blood by continuing to sin.

And, is there any carryover effect? Should I not, um, indulge myself by causing another... Another's blood to be spilt, whether it be, uh, animal or not?

Um, so I feel that, um, moral dilemma going on within my head, but it hasn't led to anything dietary for me.

[59 : 53] Yeah. It's a good start. It's a good start. It's a good start. It's gonna start somewhere. Um, what do you think of that? Yeah. I think that, um, we can't forget Genesis, um, and like, that God did give us to be stewards, um, and that he gave us, uh, definitely until the fall they were vegetarian and then after they started eating meat.

Um, so it's, and the whole kind of Levitical system is, um, about sacrificing but the meat wasn't wasted. Um, they ate, they still ate the meat, but it was first given as a thanksgiving for Christ, for God.

Um, so that would be my first point. Um, and that, and then, you know, Christ's blood fulfills that sacrifice. Um, and my third point is then a lot of people unfortunately don't have that great connection that you have.

Um, so for many people, um, buying meat is a piece of, you know, it's in a styrofoam package and they don't have that connection with the animal at all.

They don't, you know, like, a different cut of meat doesn't mean anything to them. You know, like that's from a different part of the animal, it's just a different cut of meat. Um, so, kind of trying to bring back that, that connection of what buying meat in a safe way, you know, actually means.

[61 : 18] I think is really helpful, um, to people. And one of the things that, um, that we actually did out at Galliano with the Wilkinsons was slaughter a sheep. Um, and then we ate it.

We had a Seder supper. And so it was just a very tangible connection. And for a lot of people, they'd never seen like a process from beginning to end of this is the animal and I'm going to eat it tomorrow.

Um, and I think that actually does make you think, gee, I don't need to eat meat as much. Or there really was an actual sacrifice. Um, and I'm going to be much more thankful for each piece of meat that I get.

Yeah. In the old days, they used to hang meat. And it hung for weeks sometimes. So all the blood was extinguished from it.

And there seems to be a key there. The other factor, the principle of not going against one's own conscience, should really be a mark, I think. The principle of that.

[62 : 21] Mm. Mm-hmm. Yeah. Do you agree? What's, like, as you're saying, um, if it's your... Well, if it's a question, or if you know it's going to be a stumbling block, if you're not going to be a stumbling block, then don't do it.

Mm. That's part of the time. Yeah. I guess, um, and even myself, like, I love meat. Like, red meat is, you know... I'm from Australia. I love it.

I love it. Um, so it really, I wasn't... It's, I guess this has been a journey for me, too, in recognizing that, um, my love of red meat, I shouldn't be...

It's a luxury, and it shouldn't be indulged. Um, and I can't... I've now understand that, like, we can't all eat, you know, meat just because we can afford it, or we shouldn't maybe all eat.

Just, that's where I'm at, anyway. Um... The ideal of a portion is about three ounces. I've learned this through diabetes. So, you know, a half a cup is a good portion of vegetables, so long as it's mixed, you know.

[63 : 29] Mm-hmm. You have half a cup of this, half a cup of that. Yeah, so moderation. So we, we do indulge ourselves many times. I do, and, um... Yeah.

Uh, yeah, so... It's interesting that, um... During the World Period, and... Uh... Mm-hmm. ... and, uh... Uh... Mm-hmm. ... quite a few years beyond, um, Europe was at its healthiest.

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Europe was at its healthiest because we were on rationing. And my power weight ratio was perfect during those times.

And as soon as it came off rationing, it ruined all my records. But the answer to the troubles is rationing. It's rationing.

Yeah, maybe. That's not allowed. And what that rationing means will mean different things for different people. Okay. Oh, one more.

[64 : 36] I very much appreciate your desire to apply Christian thinking to our environment and to the whole of our lives and be individually responsible.

But just on this question of global warming, you're assuming that the alarmism is actually scientifically justified.

Yeah. And I'll only just make a comment. I don't want to be argumentative because it's a big, big subject. But I'll simply say I believe there's a fairly strong case that we've made that the political process that has led to widespread alarmism is actually unjustified.

And that sooner or later, that truth will emerge. That there are strong scientific reasons why CO₂, for example, cannot be the driver of climate change.

And that the alarming symbols that are being used to argue for imminent catastrophe are a result of, actually are a massive distortion of the scientific picture.

[65 : 55] And that very few people realize that CO₂, which is being labeled as a poison, is actually the stuff of life. Yeah. If the concentration of CO₂ were to go to zero tomorrow, we would all die in short order.

And furthermore, if CO₂ were to increase, agricultural productivity would go along with it. And so if you're talking about the need to feed a world of an increasing population, you have to think about the effects of increasing CO₂ and producing that sort of benefit.

I'm getting into too much detail here. I think there is a, you've opened up, and I'm glad you have, and you opened up a very big subject. And I don't suppose this is the place to get into arguments, especially about non-cultural matters.

But I just want to say, I believe there's a very strong case to the time. What was your name, sorry? What's your name? Phil? Thank you for your comment. I was conscious in choosing to go down, like presenting it on the route of environmental global damage.

And you're right, there is still a big debate about whether, you know, it's actually, is it being affected by us, or is it actually a natural occurrence and global change?

[67 : 24] So, the other, and so thanks for that. And it's worth considering and not just accepting anything that you're told just because someone tells you it. And I think, I guess the other way that I could have presented it was in, just in terms of the way that we take care of the environment, our stewardship of animals and of the earth and of people, is enough, sort of.

But I guess I was trying to be provocative. So, sorry for that. Well, thank you. Thank you for your time. Thank you for your time. Thank you, Rita. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for your time. Thank you, Rita. Thank you. Thank you for your time. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[69 : 28] Thank you.

Thank you.